

During the ancient period, the Khitara was already a popular instrument, but we don't know much about it. All over the world we can find remains of old lutes as old as in Egypt and Mesopotamia. However, the guitar originated in Spain in the late 15th century. Originally the Baroque guitar, as this guitar was called, had only 4 or 5 strings and each string was doubled to increase the volume.

Listen to the guitar of that time here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J-mfvMLrY28>



It was in the late 18th century that the guitar got its 6 single strings and its characteristic tuning. The instrument became more popular and classical virtuoso guitarists travelled around the world to perform. The most famous Classical Spanish guitarist of the 20th century who followed in the footsteps of these great artists was Andre Segovia. Listen to him playing here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICeebWgjrU>

The earliest Spanish settlers brought the guitar with them to the Americas. However it became popular only in the 19th century. Initially in the Southern part, the instrument made its mark. The guitar became a leading instrument in Blues music that originated from the music by slaves and was a mix of work songs, African music and spirituals. The Blues is at the heart of the development of Jazz and popular music in the 20th century and even today, we can feel its influence in pop music. Listen to one the greatest Blues guitarists: BB King:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWLAzOBoBI>



The guitar also became an important instrument in country music. The soft sounding gut or nylon strings were replaced with steel strings to create more volume. The earliest experiments with electric guitars started in 1927 to create a guitar that could play with louder instruments. In 1957 the first Fender electric guitar was made.

To think about: Listen to the music links. Which one did you like best? In what country did the guitar originate? Name a Spanish guitarist and a Blues guitarist.

In the early 1830s, Mexican cattle herders brought the guitar to the islands of Hawai'i. There the famous Hawai'ian guitar was developed and later came to India.

Joseph Kekukuupenaokamehamehakanaiaupuni Apuakehau, who shortened his stage name to Kekuku, is credited with the invention of the Hawaiin guitar in 1885. It is said he laid a guitar across his lap and moved the back of metal comb across the frets to create the special sound of the Hawaiian steel guitar. He left Hawai'i in 1930 to never return to his homeland, but influenced guitarists from all over the world. He was the main influence on another Hawaiin guitarist, Tau Moe who introduced India to the Hawaiin slide guitar.



Tau Moe and his wife Rose Moe, a well known singer with their Hawaiin Band EMMI lived in Kolkata (Calcutta) from 1941-47 during which period, they made many recordings and toured extensively around Asia. Tau Moe's star student in India was Mr. Garney Nyss who became India's leading Slide Guitar artist. The first artist credited to play classical music on the slide guitar is Shri Nalin Mazumdar, a disciple of Baba Allaiddin Khan, founder of the Maihar gharana.

Tau Moe felicitated by Pt Debashish Bhattacharya

The fifties and early sixties saw popularity of the steel Hawaiian guitar grow in Kolkata. However, it was mainly used in popular music, film music and light classical. It was initially not seen as suitable for the demands of classical Raga music until the work of Pandit Brij Bhushan Kabra who as a young man would make his mark in Hindutani Classical music.



A disciple of Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, he raised the playing standard of the Indian slide guitar to concert level. Listen to his famous collaboration 'Call of the Valley' with Pt Hariprasad Chaurasia and Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1zzVqrCEeU>



Another artist who made important contributions to classical Indian slide guitar is Padma Bhushan Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt. A disciple of Pandit Ravi Shankar, he created the Mohan Veena and won the Grammy award in 1994 for his collaborative album 'Meeting by the River' with American slide guitarist Ry Cooder. Listen to their music here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-nZYejNVZn0>

To think about: Where is the Indian slide guitar from? Apart from Debashish Bhattacharya, name two more Indian Classical guitarists.